United Nations A/63/131

General Assembly

Distr.: General
15 July 2008

Original: English

Sixty-third session
Item 39 of the preliminary list*
Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Question of Western Sahara

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 62/116, summarizes the reports that have been submitted by the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the situation concerning Western Sahara from 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008.

* A/63/50.

08-42338 (E) 010808

1. On 17 December 2007, the General Assembly adopted, without a vote, resolution 62/116 on the question of Western Sahara. The Secretary-General, in close cooperation with the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union, has continued to exercise his good offices with the parties concerned. The present report, covering the period from 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008, is submitted in accordance with paragraph 7 of resolution 62/116.

2. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1754 (2007), the Secretary-General submitted a report dated 19 October 2007 (S/2007/619) to the Security Council on the situation concerning Western Sahara. In that report, the Secretary-General informed the Council that the parties, Morocco and the Frente Polisario, had participated in a second round of talks on 10 and 11 August 2007. Algeria and Mauritania also attended, as neighbouring countries. The meeting had included an exchange of views with regard to the implementation of resolution 1754 (2007), presentations by United Nations experts, and discussions on subjects related to natural resources and local administration. During the meeting, the parties agreed to a communiqué of the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy, in which they acknowledged that the current status quo was unacceptable and that they were committed to continuing the negotiations in good faith. As for maintenance of the ceasefire, the Secretary-General informed the Council that the overall situation in the area of responsibility of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) remained generally calm. Violations of military agreement No. 1 by both parties remained at the same level as in the previous reporting period. In addition, MINURSO continued to observe long-standing violations by both parties; since the start of the Mission's mandate, both parties had imposed restrictions on the freedom of movement of the MINURSO military observers. With regard to humanitarian activities and efforts led by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme, the Secretary-General stated that the food pipeline remained fragile and that the absence of secure food stocks since October 2006 continued to be a major concern. In his observations and recommendations, the Secretary-General agreed with his Personal Envoy's assessment that the launch of the process of negotiations was a cause for satisfaction. However, he recommended that the Security Council reiterate its call upon the parties to enter into genuine negotiations, thus ensuring a more substantial implementation of resolution 1754 (2007).

3. On 31 October 2007, the Security Council adopted resolution 1783 (2007), having considered the report of the Secretary-General of 19 October 2007 (S/2007/619). In that resolution, the Council called upon the parties to continue to show political will and work in an atmosphere propitious for dialogue in order to engage in substantive negotiations, thus ensuring implementation of resolution 1754 (2007) and the success of negotiations. It also called upon the parties to continue negotiations under the auspices of the Secretary-General without preconditions and in good faith, taking into account the efforts made since 2006 and developments of the last months, with a view to achieving a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution, which would provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara in the context of arrangements consistent with the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, and noted the role and responsibilities of the parties in that respect. The Council also decided to extend the mandate of MINURSO until 30 April 2008.

4. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1783 (2007), the Secretary-General submitted to the Council a report dated 25 January 2008 on the status and progress of the negotiations on Western Sahara (S/2008/45). In that report, the Secretary-General informed the Council that the parties had participated from 7 to 9 January 2008 in a third round of negotiations facilitated by his Personal Envoy. During the discussions, the parties had reiterated their commitment to the process of negotiations. Nevertheless, their stated positions remained far apart on ways to achieve a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that would provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. The parties had also engaged in an extensive exchange of views with regard to the implementation of resolutions 1754 (2007) and 1783 (2007). In addition, the matter of confidence-building measures was included on the agenda in order to obtain greater clarity as to the positions of the parties on existing or additional confidence-building measures, as well as on the appropriate forum for discussing such measures. The parties also participated in discussions on thematic subjects related to administration, competences and organs. At the end of the meeting, the parties agreed to a communiqué of the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy, in which it was acknowledged that the parties had continued to express strong differences on the fundamental questions at stake. At the same time, the parties reiterated their commitment to show political will and negotiate in good faith, as called for by the Security Council, and agreed on the need to move the process into a more intensive and substantive phase of negotiations.

5. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1783 (2007), the Secretary-General submitted a report dated 14 April 2008 to the Security Council (S/2008/251). In that report, the Secretary-General informed the Council that his Personal Envoy had undertaken a visit to the region from 5 to 15 February for in-depth consultations on ways to move the process of negotiations into a more intensive and substantive phase. The Secretary-General also informed the Council that the parties had participated, from 16 to 18 March 2008, in the fourth round of negotiations. Algeria and Mauritania attended as neighbouring countries. During the discussions, the parties had reiterated their commitment to the process of negotiations. During the meeting, the parties engaged in a broad exchange of views on the implementation of resolutions 1754 (2007) and 1783 (2007), and to the exercise of the principle of self-determination. In addition, the parties participated in discussions on thematic subjects related to administration, competencies and organs, as well as to justice, and to resources. The parties were also invited to consider strengthening and expanding the existing programme of confidence-building measures. In this regard, the delegation of the Frente Polisario replied that it accepted all proposals made by the Personal Envoy, without exception. The parties finally agreed to explore the establishment of family visits by land, in addition to the existing programme by air. Matters with regard to respect for human rights in the Territory as well as in the refugee camps in the Tindouf area were also raised by the parties. In concluding the meeting, the parties agreed to a communiqué of the Personal Envoy and reiterated their commitment to continue the negotiations at a date to be determined by common agreement.

6. With regard to the ceasefire, the Secretary-General informed the Council that the overall situation in the area of responsibility remained generally calm. MINURSO continued to enjoy good relations with both the Royal Moroccan Army and the armed forces of the Frente Polisario. However, both sides continued to

abstain from dealing directly with each other. Furthermore, both parties continued to extend their cooperation to MINURSO in the marking and disposal of mines, unexploded ordnance and expired ammunition.

7. With regard to confidence-building measures, the Secretary-General stated that the UNHCR-led programme of exchange of family visits continued to be successfully implemented in close coordination with MINURSO. The free-of-charge telephone service between the refugee camps near Tindouf and the Territory was operating successfully. UNHCR, with support from MINURSO, had also procured the equipment necessary for the installation of a fifth telephone centre, in Dakhla camp, some 180 kilometres from Tindouf, and was negotiating with the Government of Algeria to secure permission to import the equipment into Algeria. The Secretary-General regretted that the first seminar under the confidence-building programme, to be held in November 2007 in Madeira, Portugal, had been cancelled following Morocco's notification to UNHCR that it was not in a position to accept either the principle or the opportuneness of the seminar. The Secretary-General pointed out that the confidence-building measures programme was the one area in which visible progress had been achieved between the parties recently, that it had the potential to build trust and to help break out of the impasse in other areas, and that it directly affected the quality of life of Western Saharans on a very human level. Therefore, he called upon the international community to demonstrate its support for the continuation of the programme and strongly urged the donor community to contribute generously to the programme.

8. As for human rights, international non-governmental organizations concerned with human rights and other sources had reported the alleged harassment and arrest of Western Saharan human rights and political activists, and pointed to incidents where the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly appeared to have been compromised by Moroccan authorities in the Territory. In addition, Moroccan media sources expressed concerns about alleged human rights abuses in the Western Saharan camps near Tindouf and highlighted the allegedly deteriorating human rights and humanitarian situation of Western Saharan refugees in the camps.

9. In his observations and recommendations, the Secretary-General welcomed the parties' commitment to continue the process of negotiations but concurred with his Personal Envoy that the momentum could only be maintained by trying to find a way out of the current political impasse through realism and a spirit of compromise from both parties.

10. After consideration of the report of the Secretary-General of 14 April 2008 (S/2008/251), the Security Council adopted resolution 1813 (2008) on 30 April 2008. The Council endorsed the recommendation in the report that realism and a spirit of compromise by the parties were essential to maintain the momentum of the process of negotiations. The Council called upon the parties to continue to show political will and work in an atmosphere propitious for dialogue in order to enter into a more intensive and substantive phase of negotiations, thus ensuring implementation of resolutions 1754 (2007) and 1783 (2007) and the success of negotiations; and affirmed its strong support for the commitment of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy towards a solution to the question of Western Sahara. The Council went on to call upon the parties to continue negotiations under the auspices of the Secretary-General without preconditions and in good faith, taking into account the efforts made since 2006 and subsequent developments, with

a view to achieving a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution, which will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara in the context of arrangements consistent with the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, and noting the role and responsibilities of the parties in that respect. The Council decided to extend the mandate of MINURSO until 30 April 2009.

United Nations A/63/132

General Assembly

Distr.: General
15 July 2008

Original: English

Sixty-third session
Item 126 of the preliminary list*
Human resources management

Measures taken to address seven systemic human resources issues raised in the context of the reform of the internal system of administration of justice

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The General Assembly, in its resolution 62/228, requested the Secretary-General to report on specific measures taken by the administration to address seven systemic human resources issues raised, in the context of the reform of the internal system of administration of justice, in the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Ombudsman (A/62/311). The issues identified are the staff selection system; mobility; locally recruited staff; contractual practices; special entities established by the United Nations; staff welfare; and coverage for psychological care.

* A/63/50.

08-42447 (E) 050808

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 62/228, entitled "Administration of justice at the United Nations", the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report on specific measures taken by the administration to address seven systemic human resources issues raised, in the context of the reform of the internal system of administration of justice, in the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Ombudsman (see A/62/311, sect. IV).

2. The seven issues identified by the Office of the Ombudsman are the staff selection system; mobility; locally recruited staff; contractual practices; special entities established by the United Nations; staff welfare; and coverage for psychological care.

3. In this regard, following the issuance of the report, the Department of Management convened meetings with the Office of the Ombudsman to obtain additional details with respect to each of those topics.

4. Also following the issuance of the report, the Secretary-General established a task force, chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General, which he specifically requested to find solutions to the problems identified by the Ombudsman in the interrelated areas of recruitment and contractual arrangements, including geographical distribution and gender; and career development, including mobility and training. Proposals emanating from that task force have been sent to the Secretary-General; those requiring consultations with staff will be discussed with them, including through the Staff-Management Coordination Committee. Although the work of the task force was driven by the human resources issues identified by the Ombudsman, its proposals go further, and are aimed at strengthening the human resources framework through policy changes, programmes and technology-based support tools. When implemented, the proposals will transform the organizational culture of the Secretariat as envisaged by the Secretary-General so that it is more responsive, focused on delivering results and committed to the highest standards of efficiency, accountability and integrity through the development of a highly skilled, well-trained and mobile workforce. Successful implementation will require partnerships between entities performing human resources functions and managers and heads of departments, as well as constructive engagement on the part of staff and staff representatives.

5. The Department of Management strongly agrees with the emphasis on the need for increased communications activities, as highlighted in several paragraphs of the report. Paragraphs 53 to 55 contain a reference to the need for the development of awareness-raising activities by the Office of the Ombudsman, and the Secretary-General strongly maintains that such awareness-raising in many areas needs to be a joint effort by both the Office of the Ombudsman and the Office of Human Resources Management. It is only through better communication that staff can be made fully aware of the policies and procedures of the Organization. If information is readily available and easy to understand, then the frustration and concerns of staff can be more effectively addressed.

II. Systemic issues

A. Staff selection system

6. Paragraphs 41 to 43 of the report (A/62/311) highlight the importance of the staff selection system and the frustration of those staff who find that they are not selected during the competitive process mandated by the General Assembly. Because of the nature of any competitive system of recruitment, placement and promotion, there will always be one or several staff members who will not be selected for a particular post. In addition, a balance has to be struck between the need to place or promote existing internal staff and the need to attract external candidates. In the United Nations context, the Secretariat has to contend not only with that issue, but also with a system designed to ensure that appropriate consideration be given to the mandates of the General Assembly relating to geographical distribution and gender balance. Furthermore, the restriction on the movement of staff from the General Service to the Professional categories and the requirement of entry at the junior professional level through the national examination process have an impact on the staff selection system. The Secretariat has therefore had to develop a system which not only addresses those issues, but also balances other human resources needs, such as internal selection for lateral moves; promotions; increasing mobility; and oversight of the process (central review bodies). All of those components result in a complex United Nations staff selection system. In any staffing system as complex as that required by the United Nations, it is imperative that the process be transparent and fair and include sufficient controls so as to balance the specific mandates established by the governing bodies, the need to promote staff and the need to attract new talent.

7. The staff selection system is based on, inter alia, the need to ensure accountability for the work entrusted to programme managers and on the fact that programme managers can be held accountable for their work only if they are able to select the best talent available. In order to ensure that the process is as transparent as possible, the system includes checks and balances both at the advertisement phase and upon completion of the process through review by the central review bodies. Lists of eligible candidates only are forwarded to the programme managers by the Office of Human Resources Management. The perception that unqualified or non-meritorious candidates are selected over internal staff may arise; however, there are safeguards in place, in the form of the central review bodies, which are specifically tasked with ensuring that the evaluation criteria are properly applied and that no extraneous factors influence the selection decision.

8. Considerable concern has been expressed by both the Office of the Ombudsman and Member States that the shift in responsibility fully to programme managers may have to be reconsidered and that a stronger role be assigned to the Office of the Secretary-General and/or delegated to the Office of Human Resources Management in order to ensure compliance with organizational obligations to meet General Assembly mandates. This issue will be more fully addressed in the report of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform, which will be presented to the General Assembly at its sixty-third session.

9. In paragraph 42 of the report on the activities of the Ombudsman, several issues are raised, including the reduction in functions performed by human resources professionals; lack of staffing resources in the substantive offices; and the

perception of a move from objectivity to subjectivity. It is true that, following the initial screening of candidates by the Office of Human Resources Management for eligibility, programme managers are required to shortlist candidates. However, it is the programme managers — who have the requisite knowledge of their occupational fields — who can best assess the personal history profiles/curricula vitae of individuals with a view to determining which should be interviewed. As to the need for staffing resources, the new system has been in place for several years; if programme managers believe they cannot accomplish such tasks without additional resources, they have the opportunity to address such shortfalls during the biennial budget submission process. Lastly, with regard to the perception that the process is more subjective than in the past, the Department of Management would argue otherwise. As mentioned in paragraph 7 above, it is the role of the central review bodies to provide oversight over the entire process, not just at the end when a candidate is recommended. The Office of Human Resources Management has developed generic job profiles which cover most jobs in the Secretariat and have led to the standardization of language and evaluation criteria, which are immediately available to programme managers. This has ensured that the process is more balanced than in the past and that final decisions are fair and equitable. In addition, the increased use of generic job profiles in developing vacancy announcements has contributed to the enhanced uniformity of requirements contained in vacancy announcements, including the evaluation criteria.

10. Paragraph 43 of the report refers to the system for clearing candidates; absence of substantive input by human resources staff in a large part of the process; and the belief of some staff members that they have been unfairly excluded from the shortlist. There have been issues relating to the timely and appropriate screening and background checking of candidates, particularly in the case of external candidates. This issue is being reviewed by the Office of Human Resources Management, which will be returning to the General Assembly with concrete suggestions for improving the current process, including in the context of the resource implications associated with such proposals. As to the substantive input of the Office of Human Resources Management, the Office continues to perform a variety of functions in the staff selection process, including the preparation of generic job profiles; the review of post classification levels; the pre-screening of candidates for eligibility prior to review by programme managers; the provision of geographical status information (through an indicator in the Galaxy system) to departments/offices indicating when candidates are from unrepresented, underrepresented or overrepresented countries; participation in the central review bodies; and the provision of human resources planning data to department heads, who are responsible for implementing geographical and gender targets. Lastly, on the issue of the perception regarding shortlists and who is included, no organization offers a guarantee to staff that they will always make the shortlist for an interview. The central review bodies do ensure that all internal staff members have been reviewed by the programme manager. The details included in the personal history profile/curriculum vitae, prior knowledge of an internal applicant's skills and information provided by references are all considered when deciding who proceeds to the interview stage. In this regard, the Office of Human Resources Management believes that programme managers who do not select their own staff for a particular shortlist should have the obligation to meet with those staff who are not selected and inform them of the reason for their non-selection and what action they can take to improve their chances when applying

for subsequent vacancies. This issue was raised and agreement reached during the twenty-seventh session of the Staff-Management Coordination Committee.

11. The Secretariat believes that, in order to address the perception of staff members that the selection process is subjective, more communication with staff must be undertaken. In this regard, both the Office of Human Resources Management and the Department of Field Support will ensure that staff members receive adequate and relevant information on the staff selection system. As the report on the activities of the Ombudsman makes clear, if staff are better informed about the process and how they fare in it, many of the perceptions and fears of unfair treatment may be prevented. In this regard, the Office of Human Resources Management believes that a targeted information campaign needs to be developed, particularly in the light of proposed changes being considered with regard to the new talent-management system.

B. Mobility

12. The Office of Human Resources Management fully agrees with the report on the activities of the Ombudsman that communication will be essential to future mobility initiatives. The mobility policy was introduced as an integral part of the staff selection system to support, inter alia, the development of a more versatile, multi-skilled and experienced international civil service and the promotion of greater integration among staff throughout the Secretariat. To date, the first phases of the mobility programme for the P-3/G-7 and P-4/G-6 levels have been completed, with a transparent compendium of available posts. The phase for P-5 and G-5 levels is currently under way. The posts of those staff who have exceeded the five-year post incumbency period are included in the compendiums of posts.

13. There is a reference in paragraph 45 of the report to staff's perception regarding post or functional changes within a particular department or office. Mobility, defined in its broadest sense, includes movement within and between departments, functions, occupational groups, duty stations and organizations of the United Nations system. Within the context of this definition of mobility, within-department moves of staff at the same level are encouraged. Guidelines to this effect have been widely disseminated. Lateral moves enable the learning of new skills sets for staff resulting from substantial changes in function. This type of multi-skilled staff development is the basis of the entire process and allows for staff members to obtain multiple exposures. Even within departments, managers must recognize that information about such opportunities should be shared and that they should be internally advertised, and staff who qualify should be given access to such opportunities. Department heads have the authority to redeploy staff at the same level within the respective department so that they can learn new skills and maintain a certain level of institutional knowledge within the department. The report notes that some programme managers may make exceptions. It is important to note that within the context of the managed reassignment programme, administrative instruction ST/AI/2007/2 provides for exemptions for a staff member to participate in a specific exercise. Such exemptions are reviewed on a case-by-case basis and may be granted for a number of reasons, including situations in which there are valid medical grounds or where the technical requirements or degree of specialization needed for a post cannot be met by other staff participating in the managed reassignment programme. However, these are limited in scope. It is

therefore not within the purview of specific programme managers to exclude anyone from the programme. All such requests must be fully justified and are then decided upon by the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management.

14. Within the mobility programme, the Office of Human Resources Management recognizes that there are perceptions that lateral movement of staff is easier at the larger duty stations and within larger departments. The concerns expressed by staff and managers at the smaller offices continue to be reviewed by the Office of Human Resources Management and the Staff-Management Coordination Committee intersessional working group, and by the Staff-Management Coordination Committee in plenary meeting. Recommendations resulting from a review of the implementation of the mobility policy, including the managed reassignment programme, will be included in a report to be submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-third and subsequent sessions.

C. Locally recruited staff

15. The perception of a disparity in emoluments between locally recruited and internationally recruited staff in the peacekeeping arena or at any of the main Secretariat duty stations or regional commissions needs to be clarified on a global basis. The establishment of the emoluments packages for locally recruited staff and internationally recruited staff was based on principles set out by the General Assembly. Both the Noblemaire and Flemming principles define the basis for how salaries and emoluments for internationally and locally recruited staff are paid. Those principles and the benefits packages associated with them are reflected in the Staff Regulations adopted by the General Assembly. The perception of inequity by an individual local staff member may be the result of a lack of understanding of the compensation system of the United Nations common system. As the Ombudsman has identified such perceptions as giving rise to recurring complaints among staff at various duty stations, the Office of Human Resources Management and the Department of Field Support believe that greater communication with staff in the field aimed at explaining the two methodologies and the basis for salary setting would probably be useful.

16. The report also identified complaints relating to the inadequacy of medical coverage, the failure to provide reimbursement for the installation of security measures in areas of insecurity, the absence of a similar duty to evacuate in time of crisis as applies to internationally recruited staff, the alleged disparity between the conditions of service of locally recruited peacekeeping personnel and locally recruited staff of the funds and agencies and insufficient training opportunities for locally recruited staff.

17. Issues relating to the security of locally recruited staff in the field have been a cause for concern and are being carefully considered by the Department of Safety and Security, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs on a situation-by-situation basis. Locally recruited staff and their families are included in mission security plans and are relocated within the countries concerned in times of crisis. The number of locally recruited staff in United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions has increased by over 67 per cent over the past few years, rising from 11,389 in 2005 to 19,050 in February 2008.

Familiarizing such large numbers of new staff with United Nations policies and practices has its challenges, which the Departments are working to address.

18. The Department of Field Support established a working group on national staff, which met twice in 2007 to discuss issues of concern to locally recruited staff in peacekeeping and special political missions. The working group consists of representatives of the Department of Field Support, the Office of Human Resources Management, the United Nations Staff Union and staff and management representatives from field missions. The working group was a useful mechanism for understanding and addressing the concerns of local staff and for educating local staff representatives.

19. On the issue of training, locally recruited staff in field missions receive job-related technical training as well as training in computer programs, language training, e-PAS training and access to mandatory e-learning programmes, such as the Integrity Awareness Online Learning Programme, the prevention of workplace harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of authority online training programme and the security in the field online training programme, and to other organizational learning programmes at the mission level. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 59/296, training outside the mission area is, however, limited to training specifically related to the functions of the post or necessary to the implementation of the mandate. The Departments of Political Affairs, Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support are endeavouring to ensure that individual missions include training for national staff in their annual training programmes and that training be provided for supervisors to help build a common organizational culture among newly recruited managers in the field. Regarding medical insurance, efforts are being made to improve the administration of the medical insurance plan for locally recruited staff in field locations.

20. Regarding the disparity between conditions of service of locally recruited staff of United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions and those of the agencies, funds and programmes, all organizations applying the common system pay the same salaries and allowances as set out in the local scales established by the Office of Human Resources Management and hazard pay as established by the International Civil Service Commission. Regarding compensatory time off and overtime policies, the Secretariat is working with the other organizations of the United Nations common system towards harmonization of practices in the field. However, staff in United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions are subject to the staff regulations, rules and policies of the Secretariat.

D. Contractual practices

21. The proposals made by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly (see A/61/861 and A/62/274) were specifically designed to address the current contractual disparity and the resulting concerns of staff both in peacekeeping and other mission settings. The myriad contractual modalities which are currently used by the Secretariat can lead to a situation in which staff working side by side receive different emoluments, benefits and entitlements. This issue is addressed in the proposal of the Secretary-General that is before the General Assembly. The Office of Human Resources Management looks forward to the General Assembly's

decision on this issue, which would go a long way towards reducing or eliminating the concerns of staff in this area.

22. With regard to the Ombudsman's concern about the small number of permanent contracts, the Office of Human Resources Management agrees that continuity of employment for long-serving staff is important. The Secretariat has submitted proposals to the General Assembly which address the need for some type of longer-term contractual loyalty to staff while at the same time giving the Organization the flexibility to ensure it has the right mix of staff at any given time. The proposals of the Secretary-General for streamlining United Nations contractual arrangements (see A/62/274), which are consistent with the International Civil Service Commission's framework, will also go a long way towards alleviating the fears of staff on short-term appointments, which may be renewed on a yearly basis.

E. Special entities established by the United Nations

23. Paragraphs 48 and 49 of the report on the activities of the Ombudsman (A/62/311) do not clarify the status of special entities other than the Special Court for Sierra Leone and the United Nations Assistance to the Khmer Rouge Trials (UNAKRT). The Special Court for Sierra Leone is not a United Nations entity and as such does not fall under the United Nations umbrella with respect to the rights of staff in terms of the application of the United Nations system of administration of justice. The Court developed its own internal mechanism as approved by its management committee. Its staff were not accorded United Nations contracts and are therefore not protected by United Nations regulations and rules and, as it is a non-United Nations body, there is no expectation of such.

24. The case of UNAKRT is different, as each staff member hired by UNAKRT has been appointed under the 200 series of the Staff Rules and its staff have full access to the United Nations system of administration of justice. Likewise, both the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia are subsidiary organs of the Security Council and as such the staff of both Tribunals are appointed under the 100 series of the Staff Rules.

F. Staff welfare

25. Paragraphs 50 and 51 of the report make reference to the need for staff welfare facilities in the more remote sub-offices. The Organization agrees that recreation and welfare facilities are needed in difficult and isolated field locations. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations has developed a welfare policy and missions have begun to request resources for establishing facilities. The Department of Field Support is also working towards establishing minimum standards for building staff accommodation, which will include recreation and welfare facilities. The Secretary-General has also proposed replacing the current occasional recuperation break with paid rest and recuperation travel, which would provide for payment of travel to a designated rest and recuperation location, five days of leave not charged to annual leave and travel time. However, as both the establishment of recreation and welfare activities and the introduction of paid rest and recuperation travel have financial implications, the approval of the General Assembly for those initiatives would be required.

G. Coverage for psychological care

26. Paragraph 52 of the report relates to the issue of psychological coverage under appendix D to the Staff Rules on compensation for service-incurred psychological trauma or other resulting mental problems and to the concern that the current coverage is not sufficient. In this regard, the Human Resources and Finance and Budget Networks of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination have established a joint working group to review appendix D coverage. This item is included in the workplans of both Networks for 2008.

III. Conclusion

27. In conclusion, the Secretary-General recognizes that many of the issues which were included in the report on the activities of the Ombudsman are now either under review internally and will result in proposals to the General Assembly; already before the General Assembly; or in need of further consideration. Furthermore, the Secretary-General intends to ask the Office of the Ombudsman, the Office of Human Resources Management and the Departments of Political Affairs, Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support to intensify their communication strategies with the staff of the entire Organization.

United Nations A/63/133

General Assembly

Distr.: General
16 July 2008

Original: English

Sixty-third session
Item 58 (a) of the preliminary list*
Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly

Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in response to General Assembly resolution 62/131 on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly. The report provides an overview of the deliberations held on the priority theme "Promoting full employment and decent work for all" and issues pertaining to social groups during the forty-sixth session of the Commission for Social Development. It also addresses the emerging issues of social protection and youth employment and examines challenges for mainstreaming disability in the development agenda. In conclusion, the report highlights a number of recommendations for achieving full employment and decent work for all.

* A/63/50.

08-42568 (E) 070808

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I. Introduction

1. In the context of its review of the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly and in accordance with its multi-year programme of work, the Commission for Social Development discussed "Promoting full employment and decent work for all" as the priority theme for the 2007-2008 implementation cycle. The review segment held in 2007 identified obstacles, best practices and approaches for promoting full employment and decent work. The policy segment, held during its forty-sixth session of the Commission in February 2008, resulted in an action-oriented resolution submitted to the Economic and Social Council for adoption.[1] In accordance with Council resolution 2007/2, it was decided to keep full and productive employment and decent work for all under review in both the Commission and the General Assembly.

2. The present report highlights the major points discussed by the Commission at its policy session in relation to the priority theme and the social groups. The report also examines three emerging issues from the perspective of the priority theme: social protection, youth employment and mainstreaming disability in the development agenda.

II. Synopsis of the substantive discussions held during the forty-sixth session of the Commission for Social Development on the priority theme "Promoting full employment and decent work for all"

A. Policy framework for employment and decent work

3. The World Summit for Social Development emphasized the central role of full and productive employment in reducing poverty and achieving equitable and sustainable development. At the 2005 World Summit, world leaders made the commitment to strongly support fair globalization and resolved to make the goals of full and productive employment and decent work for all, including for women and young people, a central objective of [their] relevant national and international policies (see resolution 60/1, para. 47). In keeping with that commitment, the Secretary-General, in his report on the work of the Organization issued in 2006, proposed to include a new target, echoing the commitment of the 2005 World Summit, under Millennium Development Goal 1.[2]

4. The Ministerial Declaration adopted at the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council in 2006 identified specific steps towards promoting full employment and decent work and called for the development of 10-year action plans. The decent work agenda of the International Labour Organization (ILO), which incorporates employment creation, social protection, fundamental principles and rights at work, social dialogue and equal opportunities, provides a framework of

[1] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2008, Supplement No. 6* (E/2008/26), chap.I.A, draft resolution II.

[2] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-first Session, Supplement No. 1* and corrigendum (A/61/1 and Corr.1), para. 24.

reference for achieving the objective of full and productive employment and decent work and ensuring policy coherence in the economic and social areas. The 2008 International Labour Conference adopted a Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, designed to strengthen the capacity of ILO to promote its Decent Work Agenda and forge an effective response to the growing challenges of globalization,[3] in which, inter alia, international and regional organizations with mandates in closely related fields are invited to work with ILO on the implementation of the integrated approach to the promotion of decent work for all.

5. Achieving full and productive employment and decent work requires a major policy commitment as, in most countries, economic growth remains insufficient to create decent jobs, while in others, higher growth rates have not translated into the generation of better and more productive jobs, especially for the poor. The failure of globalization to create quality jobs therefore deserves priority attention.

6. At the international level, policies should focus on the challenges posed by trade and financial market liberalization, foreign direct investment, fiscal policy and labour market reforms, as well as international migration. Labour mobility is an integral feature of globalization and an issue for international cooperation. International trade and sound financial systems can be effective tools to create favourable conditions for the development of all countries. However, trade barriers and unfair trading practices continue to have negative effects on employment growth in developing countries. Enhanced international cooperation, including through fulfilling commitments for official development assistance and debt relief, is important to fully implement the decent work agenda. Furthermore, greater policy coherence among trade, aid, economic policies and social policies is essential. The international community must address the employment implications of global macroeconomic conditions and of the international trading system to that effect.

7. At the national level, policy efforts should aim at economic growth, employment generation and productivity growth while keeping the focus on the promotion of the decent work agenda. National development strategies should enhance coherence between financial and economic policies on the one hand, and employment, market policies and social policies on the other hand. It is, therefore, critical that the employment objective be an integral component of macroeconomic policies. Moreover, market efficiency and flexibility need to be balanced with considerations of social protection. While opening to international trade and foreign investment can create opportunities, it is important to ensure that the benefits are fairly shared and that those who may be negatively affected are granted basic support.

8. Investing in full and decent work opportunities constitutes a commitment to fairness and justice, and to more effective public policy and better governance. Strategies for employment creation should address the challenges of income inequality, social exclusion and discrimination, and extending labour standards and social protection programmes. Stronger systems for guaranteeing a minimum wage are needed as well, to ensure that the lowest paid workers receive some dividends from economic growth.

[3] See http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_094042.pdf.

1. Agriculture and enterprise development

9. Agricultural and small enterprise development plays a special role in advancing the goal of employment and decent work at the national level. The agricultural sector still accounts for a very large share of total employment in a majority of developing countries and, therefore, priority needs to be given to enhancing rural and agricultural development. Policies should be directed at raising investments in rural infrastructure, expanding farmers' access to markets and financial services, improving agricultural productivity, and facilitating diversification from agriculture to other economic activities. Improving rural labour market outcomes should be an integral part of pro-poor growth strategies and poverty reduction strategies.

10. The promotion of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, including cooperative enterprises, is essential to job creation and productivity growth, as well as to moving large numbers of people out of poverty. Towards this end, policies need to focus on fostering enterprise and entrepreneurship, improving business environment and regulatory frameworks, providing access to markets and credit, services, information and new technologies and encouraging productive investment, as well as raising the quality of jobs. Particular attention should be given to policies that promote small and medium-sized enterprises and women's participation and entrepreneurship.

11. In addition, national policies should facilitate participation of small and medium-sized enterprises in domestic and international trade, as well as the transition of small and medium-sized enterprises in the informal sector to the formal sector.

2. Education and skills

12. In a globalizing world, where demand for knowledge and skills evolves rapidly, low-skilled and poorly educated workers are at a clear disadvantage in meeting labour market needs. Ensuring the employability of those large numbers of workers is both a social objective and the pathway to increasing productivity and competitiveness.

13. Such an objective requires the implementation of national reforms in education and training systems. Priority attention should be given to assisting all workers without exclusion, including young people, in accessing education, vocational and technical training, upgrading skills and acquisition of new knowledge so as to improve their employability. In this context, there is a critical need to ensure sufficient investment in lifelong learning, raising the quality of education and strengthening public-private partnerships. Special emphasis should also be placed on providing special training to social groups in need of core work skills and basic education to enable them to participate in the labour market.

14. Investing in lifelong learning is an effective strategy to address the challenges of technological change and globalization. Lifelong learning improves the knowledge, skills and capacities of those who are already working. Education and skills acquisition programmes have a larger positive effect on employability and access to employment and decent work when they are part of a continuum of policy interventions such as job placement services, counselling, vocational training and retraining, and re-employment assistance.

15. National efforts to promote employment creation will have limited chances of success unless concerted efforts are made to empower women by promoting gender equality and improving their participation in the labour force. This will require policies that address the root causes of women's underrepresentation in the labour force, such as gender inequalities in education, training and health care. Technical and vocational training programmes catering to the special needs of low-income women should be developed.

3. Social protection and social dialogue

16. The goal of full and productive employment and decent work cannot be achieved unless access to basic social protection is guaranteed. Against a background of increasing insecurity in the labour market, social protection is needed to allow for the necessary adjustments and transitions. Whereas providing workers and their families with minimum income security is a matter of fairness, redistributive policies should also be viewed as an investment in national productive capacity. In the present context of globalization, social protection programmes should adapt to current labour market conditions. Extending coverage to all, including workers in the informal sector and migrant workers, should be considered a priority in national and international strategies for poverty eradication and employment promotion.

17. Appropriate institutions and regulation, including frameworks for social dialogue such as the tripartite decision-making process, and labour laws that protect workers' fundamental rights, are important elements for the effective and fair functioning of labour markets. Increased social dialogue between Governments and stakeholders can help ensure that national policies are balanced and comprehensive and receive large support. In this context, principles guaranteeing freedom of association and freedom of expression enshrined in international and national laws and regulations should be fully implemented. Furthermore, social dialogue should be inclusive of all stakeholders, including employers and workers organizations, trade unions and civil society organizations.

4. Role of the United Nations system

18. Advancing full employment and decent work as part of the broad development agenda requires a coherent approach and collaboration with all relevant United Nations entities, particularly ILO, civil society and other partners at all levels. Following the adoption by the Economic and Social Council of the 2006 Ministerial Declaration and resolution 2007/2, on the role of the United Nations system in providing full and productive employment and decent work for all, which encourage the organizations of the United Nations system to support efforts to mainstream the goals of full and productive employment and decent work in their policies, programmes and activities, there have been some encouraging signs that the United Nations system, including the international financial institutions, has been placing more emphasis on employment issues.

19. The ILO decent work country programmes are important vehicles for supporting national development efforts with which other United Nations entities need to collaborate. The United Nations system should also work together in using and implementing the toolkit for mainstreaming employment and decent work, a practical set of guidelines developed by ILO and endorsed by the Chief Executives

Board for Coordination to help the agencies, funds and programmes to assess and improve the employment and decent work outcomes of the policies and programmes they support. The toolkit should contribute to system-wide coherence in development, poverty reduction and employment promotion. It is expected that the ILO will further develop and strengthen its strategies for social protection and extending social security coverage. The United Nations system should also continue providing support in developing projects and programmes aimed at generating employment opportunities and capacity-building, and intensify efforts towards strengthening the employment content of poverty reduction strategies.

20. The Development Cooperation Forum and the Annual Ministerial Review of the Economic and Social Council could consider assessing the impact of activities and programmes of the relevant United Nations organizations on employment generation and decent work in developing countries. The Development Cooperation Forum could also encourage sharing good national practices among United Nations system partners.

B. Issues pertaining to social groups

21. Women, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, migrants and other disadvantaged groups are often disproportionately subjected to social and economic exclusion in the labour market, education and health care. Against this background, policies to achieve full employment and decent work for all should include specific measures to promote gender equality and foster social integration, including by providing the disadvantaged groups with equal access to employment opportunities and social protection and ensuring their full participation in the workforce. Employment and poverty reduction strategies should target these groups with a particular focus on addressing their marginalization in the labour market and protecting their rights at work.

1. Violence against women in the work environment

22. In addressing violence against women in the work environment, there is a need to look at the interlinkages between decent work and gender discrimination, women's participation in labour markets and effective policy interventions to eliminate all forms of violence against women.

23. Gender discrimination in labour markets undermines decent work by limiting the range of work opportunities and choices for women, reducing their incomes and increasing inequalities in labour market outcomes between men and women. This subordination tends to perpetuate violence against women at work, in the community and in the family. Violence against women at work can best be addressed within the framework of labour market policies. Moreover, such interventions can also have a positive impact on reducing violence against women in other spheres of life.

24. Gender discrimination at work has a significant social and economic cost for society. In addition to the emotional and psychological suffering it causes, gender discrimination in the workplace entails a waste of human talents and a loss in labour productivity which, in turn, negatively impacts economic growth and slows down efforts aimed at reducing poverty.

25. In the last 10 years, several positive developments in women's participation in labour markets have occurred. Gender gaps in education are narrowing everywhere and more women than men enrol in tertiary education in most regions of the world. Women's entry into the labour market continues to increase in most parts of the world. The ratio of women to men in high-status jobs has also increased, although women still constitute a minority of workers at the highest levels.

26. Despite these positive developments, numerous challenges remain. A large number of women are still working without pay and women are overrepresented in the informal sector as well as in non-standard jobs. In general, workloads are much higher for women than men, notably due to the many more hours spent in unpaid work. In addition, women continue to earn less than men on average, even for the same type of work or for work of equal value.

27. Different types of gender discrimination still persist in the work environment: occupational segregation, particularly due to pregnancy and motherhood; discrimination in remuneration; unequal division of paid and unpaid work between men and women; and sexual harassment, particularly towards young, dependent, single, separated, widowed and migrant women. All these types of discrimination are interrelated and mutually reinforcing, and they underpin gender inequality at work, which, in turn, underscores various forms of violence against women.

28. A combination of policy measures is required to abolish gender discrimination and violence against women. Among them, an effort to improve the measurement and monitoring of trends in women's labour market outcomes relative to men's is needed. Effective laws and enforcement mechanisms that incorporate a gender perspective are fundamental to curb violence against women, including incentives or promotional mechanisms in addition to sanctions. A coherent set of public policy interventions that act simultaneously upon the different types of discrimination needs to be designed. Enactment of legislation securing women's rights to property, inheritance, credit and social security, among the full range of social and economic rights, is critical to women's empowerment and to support entrepreneurship. Comprehensive labour market policies and regulations aimed at eliminating gender-based discrimination in the realm of employment and work must also be strengthened. Although the sequencing and mix of these policy measures can vary depending on national circumstances, political leadership and committed and well-equipped employers' and workers' organizations are essential.

2. Ageing and development

29. The Second World Assembly on Ageing, held in Madrid in 2002, recognized ageing as an evolving developmental phenomenon which needs to be addressed at the global level as well as within the framework of national development and poverty eradication strategies.

30. The first five-year review and appraisal of progress in implementing the recommendations of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing was conducted in 2007. The results of the national review and appraisal exercises were analysed during regional meetings organized by the United Nations regional commissions and presented at the Commission for Social Development at its forty-sixth session.

31. The review and appraisal revealed a lack of awareness of the linkages between ageing and development. Inadequate or lack of disaggregated data and research on various aspects of ageing and the life of older people, particularly in Africa, remain a major impediment for ageing-specific policies and mainstreaming efforts. As a consequence, very few ageing-related activities were carried out in some regions.

32. Strengthening the institutional and human resource capacities to formulate and implement ageing-related policy measures, as well as to integrate ageing into development plans and strategies, was identified as a high priority in most regions. However, several countries in the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) region and some in the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) region emphasized that this was unlikely without financial assistance from the international community.

33. In contrast, countries in the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region, where ageing is more advanced and has become a matter of public concern, emphasize the need for mainstreaming ageing across all policy areas. Several countries in the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) region have taken legislative initiatives on ageing. However, implementation has been limited due to the lack of related institutional mechanisms.

34. One of the main tenets of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing is that older persons must be full participants in the development process, as actors on their own behalf, particularly in the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes on ageing. Meanwhile, in many regions, there tends to be a paternalistic approach to older persons. In the Economic and Social Commission for Western Africa (ESCWA) region for instance, decision-making on older persons' health-related matters is often in the hands of their families. Even in the ECE region, which has a high rate of participation of older persons in policy formulation, the bottom-up approach advocated for review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing has been used on a limited basis.

35. In most regions, access to affordable and quality health care is a major issue for older persons. The lack of training in gerontology for health-care personnel and social workers is acute almost everywhere, while the abuse and neglect of older persons by health-care workers is quite prevalent. In response to these concerns, several countries in the ESCWA region reported instituting some basic training for all medical doctors. While there is a need to partly reorient medical services in order to meet the needs of the growing numbers of older persons, priority should also be given to promoting healthy ageing as a lifelong process.

36. All regions of the world have experienced, albeit to different extents, changes in the roles and structure of families and communities that have a direct bearing on the role of women as traditional caretakers and on the welfare of older women. However, very few developing countries have taken steps towards establishing some form of formal caregiving support.

37. Managing an ageing and possibly shrinking labour force has become an issue of serious concern in the ECE region. Consequently, a number of countries have taken measures to encourage women to join and/or to remain in the labour force, as well as to facilitate the employment of older workers. The establishment of family-friendly policies to help reconcile work, family care and family life is also viewed as crucial for improving the quality of life of persons of all ages.

III. Emerging challenges

38. Three issues have been gaining increasing attention recently in the context of social development: extending social protection and establishing universal, basic social protection in all countries; promoting youth employment; and mainstreaming disability in the development agenda. Social protection is an essential component of the decent work agenda and has significantly contributed to the reduction of poverty. Youth employment is one of the priorities of the United Nations development agenda. It is identified in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, both as an important target in its own right under Millennium Development Goal 1 and as a key contribution to achieving the other Millennium Development Goals. The adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its recent entry into force entail implementing measures to ensure full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in society.

A. Extending social protection

39. In the context of increasing labour market flexibility alongside growing informality, the need for social security systems that facilitate social integration and reduce poverty while providing an enabling framework for economic growth and social development is getting stronger. ILO estimates that 80 per cent of the world population has no adequate social protection, while 50 per cent has no coverage at all. Furthermore, a number of countries have cut back their social protection spending. The reasons range from declining public revenues due to demographic pressures to general misconceptions about the role and benefits of social protection. Among the main challenges to social protection provisions are the lack of understanding of its benefits, the real and perceived lack of funds, low technical capacity for delivery, poor governance and low political will.

40. Developing countries face significant challenges in establishing systems of social protection and/or expanding coverage under existing systems. Limited public resources are often thought to be better invested in promoting economic growth rather than spent on social transfers. Many countries in transition continue to experience diminishing social protection, including inadequate old age pensions and less protection for large families or persons with disabilities. Even countries with well-established social protection systems face challenges to social security as demographic trends threaten the financial viability of social protection systems and resources have to be increased for health care and pensions for their ageing populations. Furthermore, increasing numbers work under contractual arrangements that do not provide for unemployment, health care and pension benefits.

41. The current debate on social protection concentrates on its fiscal and economic affordability. Too often, it is assumed that social protection has high economic costs without economic benefits. There is also a perception of a trade-off between economic performance and expenditure on social protection. Another common perception is that some social protection provisions may lead to dependency.

42. Studies contradict these perceptions and clearly demonstrate that the provision of social protection has many positive outcomes. It significantly helps to reduce the possible negative impact of reforms aimed at improving labour market functioning

by minimizing vulnerability caused by structural and labour market adjustments and lessening the impact of financial crises on populations.

43. Social protection also helps to support demand for domestic goods, which is beneficial from both an economic and employment point of view. Furthermore, social protection contributes to social inclusion and stability by bringing the excluded and the poor into the mainstream of society.

44. Examples of the positive impact of social protection schemes abound. Social security transfers reduce poverty by at least 50 per cent in nearly all the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries and inequality by 50 per cent in many European countries. Studies also point to a fairly strong correlation between per hour productivity and per capita expenditure on social protection in OECD countries, where high social expenditure is conducive to good economic performance.[4]

45. Similar accounts of the strong positive social and economic impact of social protection can be found in developing countries. The conditional cash transfers programme, *Bolsa Familia*, in Brazil improved school attendance and access to health care. Positive enrolment effects and better school attendance due to cash transfers were also observed in Bangladesh, Colombia, Mexico, Nicaragua and Zambia. In Chile, Colombia, Malawi, Mexico and South Africa, cash transfers had positive effects on the height, weight and nutritional status of children. A basic cash transfer programme, *Oportunidades*, in Mexico helped to increase productivity by reducing work absenteeism due to sickness. The cash-for-education programme in Bangladesh raised productivity as well as boosted the lifetime earnings of its beneficiaries. The old-age grant programme in South Africa resulted in substantial poverty reduction, triggered intergenerational transfers, and eventually facilitated access to employment and created jobs. In the case of South Africa, studies suggest that small social protection transfers are often invested in income-generating activities, acquisition of productive assets and education, and can thus play an important role in alleviating poverty.

46. In sum, social protection is an effective way of reducing poverty, promoting social inclusion, and expanding opportunities, especially for disadvantaged groups. Social protection provisions stimulate demand, increase consumption, raise productivity and contribute to economic growth. A social protection system is an investment in people and their quality of life, and should go hand in hand with investment in human capital, education and training.

47. Whereas social protection can be viewed as an expression of social justice or a human right, stakeholders must also be convinced that it is affordable. The benefits of social protection are real, and the current debate should go beyond the merits of social protection to concentrate on practical modalities for implementation. A recent study suggests that a minimum social protection package could be affordable even in low-income countries.[5]

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[4] Michael Cichon, "Building the case for a global social floor", presentation made at the side event on the theme Global Social Floor during the forty-sixth session of the Commission for Social Development, United Nations, 7 February 2008, New York.

[5] ILO, Social Security Department, *Can low income countries afford basic social security?*, Social Security Policy Briefings, Paper 3 (Geneva, 2008), p. 5.

48. Under its decent work agenda, ILO is currently exploring ways to operationalize basic universal social protection programmes worldwide as part of global efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. This global social protection floor initiative would consist of the following programmes: universal child benefits; universal access to essential health services; modest financial relief for the working poor unable to earn enough for their families to escape poverty as a result of underemployment or low productivity; and basic tax-financed pensions for older persons, persons with disabilities and those who have lost the main breadwinner in a family.

49. Extending social security at the national level requires a multipronged approach, that includes expanding and reforming statutory social insurance programmes, promoting community-based social insurance schemes and improving cost-effective tax-financed social benefits. At the international level, advocacy efforts are necessary to place social protection at the top of the development agenda, as well as to strengthen technical assistance and knowledge development.

B. Promoting youth employment

50. Compared to adults, young people are more than three times as likely to be unemployed. In 2005, youth unemployment stood at 85 million.[6] A quarter of all youth in sub-Saharan Africa, a third of all youth in Central and Eastern Europe, and roughly one in seven youths in developed countries are neither in education nor in employment.[7] As young people are staying longer in education, the declining share of youth in the working age population is a major concern for societies with ageing populations, imposing challenges on social security systems, pensions, and health care. Of those youth who do find employment, roughly one in five, or some 125 million young people, can be classified as "working poor", working for less than $1 per day, while some 300 million young people are estimated to be working at the $2 per day level.[8] Underemployment, and the absence of decent working conditions for those working in the informal economy expand the problem further. It should also be noted that, increasingly, young people entering the labour market do so with a higher educational level than the previous generation of youth. This has created expectations on the part of young people that imperfect labour markets cannot always fulfil. The challenge in the current volatile global economic environment is thus to create opportunities for young people to participate in the world of work in ways that promote economic and social development.[9]

51. A recent comprehensive review of policy interventions, based on evidence from 289 studies in 84 countries, provides some valuable insight into the wide range of measures implemented to support youth employment.[10] The main finding of the study is that skill training is the most common type of intervention across the globe,

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[6] ILO, *Global Employment Trends for Youth* (Geneva, 2006).

[7] E/CN.5/2007/3, para. 1. See also A/62/122.

[8] ILO, *Global Employment Trends for Youth* (Geneva, 2006), p. 4.

[9] *Report of the World Social Situation 2007: The Employment Imperative* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.07.IV.9).

[10] Gordon Betcherman and others, *A Review of Interventions to Support Young Workers: Findings of the Youth Employment Inventory* (*The World Bank*, Washington, D.C., 2007).

followed by comprehensive multiservice interventions. OECD countries seem to be the most active in putting in place youth employment support programmes. As far as beneficiaries are concerned, it appears that when specific disadvantaged groups are targeted they are most often youth with low income/education, followed by gender-identified groups and then by persons with disabilities. A major caveat emerging from the study is the universal need to upgrade the evaluation of youth employment interventions, especially for cost-effectiveness. At present, the availability of proper evaluations is dismal, and this factor often leads to overestimation of the actual impact of the programmes and, as a consequence, hinders efforts to ameliorate them.

52. Government interventions, for example, through wage subsidies and fiscal incentives to hiring companies, can help first-time job seekers. In contrast, lowering wages for young workers has proven not to be effective in curbing youth unemployment. Another popular remedy, namely to raise the quality and relevance of national education systems and vocational training schemes, has been an effective way of somewhat smoothening the school-to-work transition.

53. Many countries have passed legislation that seeks to empower young people in their aspirations. Furthermore, two intergovernmental instruments have been adopted: the African Youth Charter, adopted by the African Union at its Summit in Banjul in 2006, and the Ibero-American Convention on Youth Rights. The Charter has currently received 5 of the 15 ratifications it requires to enter into force,[11] while the Ibero-American Convention on Youth Rights entered into force on 1 March 2008 after having received its fifth ratification. Both instruments cover the whole range of rights that pertain to young persons, including their right to work and to decent working conditions, social protection and vocational education.[12]

54. A proposal has also been made to define goals and targets for monitoring progress of young people in the global economy.[13] Targets have been proposed to halve, between 2005 and 2015, the proportion of youth who are neither in education nor in employment, as well as the proportion of youth in vulnerable employment, and to reduce, by 2015, the gap between youth and adult unemployment rates.

55. These regional and international initiatives, as well as the development of national action plans to promote youth employment, have been supported by the Youth Employment Network (YEN), a joint initiative by ILO, the United Nations and the World Bank. YEN was created in 2001 at the initiative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to facilitate and support the commitment of the Millennium Summit to develop and implement strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work.

56. YEN seeks to encourage countries to take stock of their national policies, prepare national action plans on youth employment and compare progress with their peers. National action plans on youth employment, promoted under the aegis of YEN, provide a framework for an integrated approach focusing on employment, employability, entrepreneurship and equal opportunities. YEN further aims to strengthen policy coherence on youth employment within the United Nations system as well as among national stakeholders, increase youth participation in global, regional, national and local policymaking, and promote and support constituency-

[11] The text of the Charter is available at http://www.uneca.org/adf/docs/African_Youth_Charter.pdf.

[12] More information at www.oij.org.

[13] A/62/61/Add.1-E/2007/7/Add.1.

building, including through capacity-building, advocacy and awareness-raising activities on youth employment. The *Guide for the Preparation of National Action Plans on Youth Employment* was released recently.[14]

57. Currently, 21 lead countries have volunteered to share their experiences and guide the way in formulating national action plans on youth employment. Over the past few years, YEN has focused on supporting lead countries in developing national action plans on youth employment, a vehicle to prioritize and operationalize youth employment. The lead country process has been an important tool for raising awareness and helping to advocate for youth employment. As benchmarks of successful youth employment policies and their underlying indicators are still at an early stage, there is a need to take this initiative to the next step by providing lead countries with assistance in monitoring the implementation of national action plans.

58. To advance this process, ILO, with the support of the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, hosted a lead country meeting in June 2008 in Geneva on establishing benchmarks for national action plans as a tool for monitoring performance and identifying indicators of success for youth employment policies. The meeting brought together government representatives responsible for the implementation of national action plans and employment and evaluation experts.

59. Other important initiatives of YEN include the creation of the Youth Consultative Group, which will work to represent the concerns of young people on: the functioning and strategic priorities of YEN and support for youth participation in development; developing and implementing youth participation mechanisms; producing enhanced indicators on youth employment; reinforcing linkages between youth employment and poverty reduction initiatives; and implementing a review of youth employment policies at the country level.

C. Mainstreaming disability in the development agenda

60. Mainstreaming disability in the development agenda is a strategy for achieving equality of opportunities for persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities represent around 10 per cent of the global population, and 80 per cent of them live in developing countries. They are more likely to be illiterate, unemployed and underemployed, and to experience ill health and poor nutrition than persons without disabilities. Persons with disabilities face barriers to education, employment and public services. Many live in poverty when they are prevented from fully participating in the economic and social life of their communities. In developing countries, 80 per cent of persons with disabilities are unemployed, while the figure is between 50 and 70 per cent in industrialized countries.

61. As a human rights instrument with an explicit social development dimension, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is both a human rights treaty and a development tool. The Convention identifies disability as an issue to be considered in all programming, rather than as a stand-alone thematic issue, and requires all States parties to implement measures ensuring full and equal

[14] Gianni Rosas and Giovanna Rossignotti, *Guide for the Preparation of National Action Plans on Youth Employment* (ILO, Geneva, 2008).

participation of persons with disabilities in society. However, disability-specific actions and programming may also be required, depending on national context.

62. Effective mainstreaming of disability in the development agenda necessitates improving awareness and involvement of all relevant stakeholders at the global, national and local levels. It also requires that efforts be made to broaden the equitable participation of persons with disabilities at all levels of decision-making. Persons with disabilities should be involved in the formulation and monitoring of the implementation of policies aiming at benefiting them directly. All development projects, including those involving gender, indigenous peoples, involuntary resettlement, social participation and inclusive governance, should take into consideration persons with disabilities and their families among the projects' regular beneficiaries.

63. Policies and programmes design is crucial to the success of efforts to mainstream disability in development. It is important to ensure that overall development efforts are directed to attain impacts that are equitably beneficial for men and women with disabilities. In addition, those designing the policies and programmes must identify barriers, including societal attitudes, that hinder persons with disabilities from participating in and benefiting from public policies and programmes, and assess the costs and benefits of specific actions to remove these barriers. Ensuring effective programme delivery and establishing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to measure progress are vital to success as well.

64. Within this context, it is important to review existing national legal and regulatory frameworks and ensure that laws and regulations are non-discriminatory and comply with the spirit and letter of the Convention. States will further need to formulate effective policies and institutions that will transform the provisions of the Convention into practices that will have a real impact on the lives of persons with disabilities. They will have to ensure that the monitoring and evaluation system put in place includes assessment of the on-the-ground impact on the lives of persons with disabilities.

65. To a significant extent, the mainstreaming of disability in development rests on providing persons with disabilities with access to employment. This involves creating equal opportunities for persons with disabilities in the open job market, including promoting their access to education and training and provision of reasonable accommodation in the workplace. In this regard, anti-discrimination legislation and non-discriminatory human resources policies are of utmost importance.

66. Actions that have proved critical to gender mainstreaming may also be relevant to mainstreaming disability in the development agenda: system-wide responsibility for disability mainstreaming resting at the highest level within agencies; participation of persons with disabilities at all levels of decision-making; strong accountability/monitoring mechanism; benchmarking; allocation of adequate resources; and disability-specific and targeted policies and programmes.

67. Capacity-building and training will have to be supported on a large scale. Technical assistance programmes need to be designed so as to ensure that persons with disabilities and their organizations can fully participate in the design and monitoring of policies and programmes. Such programmes should also target implementing agencies and their staff.

68. Another top priority lies in developing a disability knowledge and research network on all issues related to the operationalization of the Convention, ranging from data collection to legal, technical and policy expertise.

IV. Conclusion

69. The following points are based on the deliberations and outcome of the forty-sixth session of the Commission for Social Development as part of the follow-up to implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly. They are presented to the Assembly to further advance the social development agenda, including achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all.

70. To reduce poverty and promote social integration, it is critical to focus on expanding employment and decent work opportunities for all. Full and productive employment and decent work for all should be put at the centre of economic and social policy-making at both national and international levels. In achieving this goal, it is important to integrate economic and social policies, notably ensuring that social objectives are mainstreamed into macroeconomic policies.

71. In promoting employment and decent work, priority needs to be placed on investing in and further promoting agricultural development and small and medium-sized enterprises, and entrepreneurship. Promoting employment and decent work also requires investing in education, training and skills development, strengthening social protections systems and extending labour standards. Specific programmes aimed at integrating women, young people, persons with disabilities, older persons, indigenous peoples and other groups into the labour market and overcoming discrimination in employment should be developed.

72. Advancing the employment goal requires close collaboration of the organizations of the United Nations system and a commitment to mainstreaming the goals of full and productive employment and decent work in the programmes and policies they support.

73. Efforts are needed to make social protection systems more effective and responsive to economic changes. Governments should aim at providing workers in the informal economy with basic social protection to reduce their vulnerability. In developing countries, expanding basic social protection programmes should become an integral part of the national development and poverty reduction strategies.

74. Ensuring the coherence of existing laws from a gender perspective and designing policy interventions that target all types of discrimination are essential to eliminating violence against women. Measuring and monitoring trends in women's labour market outcomes relative to men's should be used to assess the impact of those policies.

75. Priority attention should be given by Governments to promoting youth employment through developing and implementing national action plans in

collaboration with all relevant partners. Countries that have not done so are encouraged to join the Youth Employment Network.

76. **Governments should pursue their efforts to mainstream the concerns of older persons into their policy agenda. They should consult with older persons and their organizations in planning, implementing and evaluating policies on ageing, poverty eradication and social protection.**

77. **Similar efforts should be made to associate persons with disabilities and their organizations in planning, implementing and evaluating all development programmes and policies. The development and dissemination of data on disability are needed to improve programming and targeting within the framework of the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at the local, national and international levels.**